

What Services Are Not Provided?

Federal and State laws prohibit the Department of Revenue from getting involved in custody and visitation issues with either parent. You may wish to contact a private attorney or other legal expert for help with custody and visitation issues.

Because of the hundreds of thousands of cases that we handle, we cannot provide the same level of personal attention that might be expected of a private attorney's office. The Department contracts with attorneys and gives them information to handle the legal aspects of cases. The attorney represents the Department on behalf of the client. Because Florida law says the attorney represents the Department, there is no attorney-client relationship between the Department's attorney and the person receiving services.

Please keep in mind that the Child Support Enforcement Program does not control how a court rules in support cases.

How We Enforce Support

We have broad authority to collect and enforce the payment of support. Our tools include:

- Suspending Florida driver licenses.
- Intercepting IRS tax refunds.
- Intercepting Florida lottery winnings, unemployment compensation and workers' compensation.
- Requiring employers to deduct support from noncustodial parents' wages.
- Placing liens on property owned by noncustodial parents.
- Reporting the support debt to credit bureaus, which can affect the noncustodial parent's credit rating.
- Freezing bank accounts.

How Long Does it Take to Get Support?

We are committed to handling each case as quickly as possible. It can take several months or even longer to locate a noncustodial parent. Unfortunately, some parents may never be found. If genetic testing is necessary to prove the father's identity, it can take 10 months or longer to get a support order. If the father lives out of state, it can take a year or more to prove paternity and get a support order.

Since every case is different, some cases take longer than others to get support. Here are some reasons for delays:

- The mother is not sure who the father of the child is, so genetic testing must be done to determine the father.
- One or both parents refuse to cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Program.
- The noncustodial parent's address or employer is not known or cannot be verified.
- The noncustodial parent lives in another state or country, which means that the Child Support Enforcement Program must follow the laws, time frames and court procedures of that state or country.
- The noncustodial parent cannot be located or is hiding to avoid paying support.
- Getting a hearing date may take time because of busy court schedules.

The Child Support Enforcement Program cannot guarantee the success of any actions within a certain period of time, but makes every effort to get results as quickly as possible.

Determining the Amount of Support

State law has guidelines for deciding how much support the noncustodial parent should pay. The guidelines look primarily at how much money each parent earns and also consider the needs of the child. The Child Support Enforcement Program first tries to get both parents to agree to the amount of support based on the guidelines. If no agreement is reached, a hearing is set to decide the amount of support. The amount of support is based on the guidelines.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

The parents and the Department of Revenue are partners in getting financial support for children. Both the mother and father have certain rights and responsibilities as parents of children who are served by our agency.

As a custodial parent, you have the right to:

- Confidential treatment of all private information given to the Department of Revenue, Child Support Enforcement Program.
- Genetic testing to determine the father of the child, if paternity has not been legally established.
- Request a review of your case if there is a question about a support collection or payment.
- Get an update on your case by calling our toll-free number 1-800-622-5437.
- Ask for a review of the amount of your support payments.



As a custodial parent, you are responsible for:

- Giving the Child Support Enforcement Program as much information as possible, such as the noncustodial parent's full name, social security number, date of birth, physical description, home address and place of employment.
- Providing copies of all support orders, such as a divorce decree, marital separation agreement, temporary support order, injunctions, court documents from other states or any other orders.
- Cooperating with the Child Support Enforcement Program. Parents who do not cooperate may have their case closed or have their public assistance benefits denied.
- Notifying the Child Support Enforcement Program and the court when you move.
- Providing information to the Child Support Enforcement Program about medical insurance that could cover your child.

As a noncustodial parent, you have the right to:

- Ask for a review of the amount of your support payments.
- Get an attorney to represent you on support issues. You will be responsible for paying your attorney's fees.
- If you have hired an attorney, all communications will be directed to your attorney.
- Ask for a genetic test if you don't think the child is yours and paternity has not been legally established.

As a noncustodial parent, you are responsible for:

- Paying your support in full and on time, regardless of the state where you or the child live.
- Notifying the Child Support Enforcement Program and the court whenever you change jobs or move.
- Paying administrative costs, such as court fees and charges for genetic testing.
- Providing information to the Child Support Enforcement Program about medical insurance that could cover your child.
- Contacting the CSE office before you fall behind on your payments.

How Support Payments Are Handled

The law requires all support payments be sent to a single location, the State Disbursement Unit, for processing and mailing.

Support payments for custodial parents who receive cash assistance (TANF) are kept by the State of Florida as reimbursement for the money received through TANF.

How Do I Apply for Child Support Services?

If you do not receive public assistance (TANF, Medicaid, or Food Stamps), you must complete an application and pay a \$25 fee before we can start. To obtain an application, you can visit our web site, call, write, or stop by the Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement office nearest you. Local office location information is found on our Internet Web site and under the State of Florida listing in your local telephone directory. If you are applying for or receiving public assistance, your case is automatically referred to us by the Department of Children and Families, and your cooperation is required.

If you received public assistance in the past, you may have an open CSE case already. Call the office nearest you to determine if you have an open CSE case.

For More Information on the Child Support Enforcement Program

Visit our web site at
<http://www.myflorida.com/dor/childsupport>
or call **1-800-622-KIDS**(1-800-622-5437)
Except: Dade County 305-530-2600
Manatee County 941-741-4039

The information in this brochure is based on Florida and federal laws. For specific legal advice, you should consult an attorney.



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Child Support Enforcement

Your child deserves support.

We're here to help get it.



Florida Department of Revenue

YOUR CHILD DESERVES SUPPORT. WE'RE HERE TO HELP GET IT.

Every child has the right to financial support from both parents until the age of 18. That's the law. When one parent has custody of the child and the other does not pay support, the custodial parent can get help from the State. In Florida, the Child Support Enforcement Program is handled by the Department of Revenue.

Our goal is to get *more money to more children more quickly*. Our success depends

on the cooperation of our many partners who have a role in obtaining support for children. These partners include mothers, fathers, caregivers, law enforcement officers, judges, clerks of court, attorneys who handle our cases, other government agencies and other states.



The Department of Revenue has child support offices throughout the state. However, our agency does not handle support cases in Dade and Manatee counties. Dade County cases are handled by the State Attorney's Office, and Manatee County cases are handled by the Clerk of Court.

Who Can Receive Child Support Services?

We provide services for:

- Custodial parents or other caregivers who are eligible for or receive public assistance (TANF Medicaid or Food Stamps). This service is free.

- Parents or other caretakers who do not receive public assistance. There is a \$25 fee for this service.

We also respond to requests from other states for help in collecting child support if the noncustodial parent lives in Florida.

What Services Are Provided?

Services provided by the Child Support Enforcement Program include:

- Determining the legal father of the child (establishing paternity) which may require genetic testing.
- Getting an order for support, including medical insurance coverage for the child.
- Collecting and distributing support payments.
- Locating parents who may owe support, even if they live in another state or country.
- Enforcing support orders from Florida and other states.
- Asking for a review to increase or decrease the amount of support based on state guidelines.
- Answering telephone inquiries through Customer Service Units to assist you and answer general questions.
- Maintaining confidential information as required by federal and state laws.

